THE
# CATHOLIC RADICAL

*"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed."* Peter Maurin

**October/November 2011** ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

# Tax the Rich?

**by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy**

The 2010 US census found that the gap between the rich and poor had doubled since 1968. That divide continues to grow. The richest 1% of Americans now owns as much as the bottom 90% (*The Atlantic*, September 2011). The chasm between rich and poor is even worse for blacks and Latinos. On July 27, 2011, the Pew Research Center reported that the median wealth of white US households in 2009 was $113,149 compared with $6,325 for Hispanics and $5,677 for blacks.

This disparity in wealth has largely been caused by governmental policies that bailed out banks and other reckless corporations, relaxed corporate and environmental oversight, cut taxes for the rich, curtailed the power of unions, depressed the minimum wage, and cut funding on public education, healthcare, transportation, and services for the poor. The White House and Congress, populated as they are overwhelmingly by the wealthy or those beholden to them, not only looked after its own, but, when the economy finally tanked under the weight of economic injustice, politicians focused their attention on cutting more funding from basic needs.

Taxes for the rich are off the table. Marxists are not surprised. They have always appraised governments in capitalist states as vehicles for upward wealth transfer. They remind us that the wealthy never really suffered either during the Great Depression or this recent Recession. The myth of stockbrokers jumping out of windows after the crash of 1929 is just that, myth. The working poor were pushed to the brink, while the government backed up the banking and other industries. No millionaires endured the grapes of wrath, just as no billionaires today have lost their home, job, healthcare, or retirement. *The Atlantic* reported, "In 2009, the country's top 25 hedge-fund managers earned $25 billion among them—more than they had made in 2007, before the crash." In fact, the international moguls of money have insisted that cash-strapped European governments transfer even more wealth upward by drastically cutting social services and the rights of labor unions. American companies like Verizon, which reported $10.2 billion in 2010 profits, are using the recession as a pretext to bloat their profits even higher through massive cuts in benefits and rights for unionized workers. Those who do physical work for Verizon are being asked to contribute

*William Gropper, 1935*

**(Continued on Page 2)**

# Solitary Confinement

**by Susan Crane**

*Editor's Note: The author is a member of the Jonah House community in Baltimore, Maryland. She is one of five peace activists calling themselves The Disarm Now Plowshares who sent to jail in March, 2011 for a demonstration for disarmament at the US Navy nuclear weapons base at Kitsap-Bangor, Washington. Her co-defendants included a Catholic sister and two priests.*

While at the Federal Detention Center SeaTac, [Seattle, Washington] Sister Anne Montgomery and I were in cell number eleven of the women's units. Cells two through ten are filled with women wearing orange, held in solitary (Special Handling Unit, SHU, as it is officially named). These sisters eat all their meals alone in their cells. They get out for a 15-minute shower three times a week. They are offered no exercise or outside time. They are not allowed to communicate with other prisoners, and we were not allowed to motion or talk to them. There is no yelling between cells. They can't participate in group prayer, or any group activity. No one offers them Eucharist.

The best we could offer was to smile as we walked by the line ten feet out from their doors.

Some of the women in solitary are pretrial, some have been sentenced. They are probably here for some sort of write-up for an infraction of the prison rule. Some have had a hearing with a Bureau of Prisons officer and have been found guilty, and so continue to sit in the solitary cells. The write-ups might be for things like fighting or making a three-way call, or the result of mental illness.

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# Tax the Rich?

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up to $3,000 a year for their healthcare at the same time as the five top executives received $258 million in salaries, bonuses, and stock options. Simon Waxman argues in the August 16 *Boston Globe* that the US is nearing "Poverty's boiling point" with "the same conditions that fueled the London riots." Obviously, the current trend cannot continue indefinitely, as many on Wall Street wish it would, without some kind of reckoning. People can only he pushed so far.

Liberals think the income gap can be shrunk by taxing the rich. They think government can be transformed into the people's friend. Perhaps. But then again, the ties of the government to the wealthy run wide and deep.

If one rules out violent revolution, what option remains for change? Although it will sound hopelessly sentimental, Dorothy Day's call for a "revolution of the heart" may be more realistic than reform or rebellion. The latter two solutions are based on the premise that the rich are an unredeemable caste and that wealth redistribution can only be accomplished through legal or physical threats.

In 1982, on a trip to Nicaragua, I met a wealthy expatriate who spewed rage at the left-wing Sandinista government for "stealing" her property. She vowed that they would fall and the wealth she left behind would be returned to her family.

Unless one plans to execute all wealthy people (something French, Russian, and Cambodian revolutionaries tried very hard to do), they can always come back into power and will, at the very least, throw as many monkey wrenches a possible into the works of society. Someone whose money is taken in taxes to help the poor gains neither credit nor compassion. In fact, the higher they are taxed, the more they resent the poor. Ebeneezer Scrooge's query, "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?" goes right to the point. He refuses to give personally to the poor because he sees himself as hard-pressed by taxes which purport to care for the poor. The fact that many of the poor "would rather die than go there" hasn't changed *vis a vis* many demeaning and stingy governmental responses to poverty. The welfare state sustains people at a very minimal level. In relation to the wealthy, the bottom third of American society are merely twitching in a spider's web. Their prospects are as bleak as their circumstance.

But occasionally, individuals come along who make a compelling case for lavish giving to the poor, at a personal sacrifice. The best of these individuals speaks of liberation, joy, and love rather than damnation and guilt. Francis of Assisi lived Gospel poverty without losing an iota of his joy in life and creation. He welcomed everyone without judgement, rich and poor, inviting them by example to lay up treasure in heaven rather than here on earth. In his biography *Reluctant Saint*, Donald Spoto says Francis, unlike many ascetics, was neither neurotic nor masochistic. His embrace of what he called "Lady Poverty" was rooted in a "heroic love affair" with God, especially in the person of Jesus. So many people divested their riches and rejected violence due to Saint Francis that some experts say he played a major role in the end of feudalism. Francis' imitation of Christ empowered saints Clare and Ignatius of Loyola, Leo Tolstoy, Gandhi,Vinoba Bhave, and even Warren Buffet centuries later.

*Loyola Renounces the World, Ken Brown*

One must be wary though. President Reagan loved to decry the welfare state in favor of private giving, but, unlike Francis, Ronald Reagan never cast off his wealth to serve the poor. The revolution of the heart that Francis and Dorothy advocated was preached with their lives. Perhaps billionaires Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, and Ted Turner, who've already freely divested much of their fortunes, have started a trend that will reduce the income gap and prevent a slide into riots or revolution. Perhaps.

In Greek mythology, when all the evils escaped from Pandora's box, only one thing was left at the bottom for humanity. Hope. Spoto's biography of Francis gives me some of that hope. More importantly, it inspires me to give from my want to Worcester's street corner beggars and the victims of today's economy at our door. I too want to experience Francis' "perfect joy." Life is too short to waste accumulating possessions. Why can't we all fall heroically in love? Ω

Vol. 28, No. 2 THE Oct./Nov.2011

CATHOLIC RADICAL

Published by:

**The Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker Community**
**52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610 Telephone: (508) 753-3588, 753-3089**
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*Founded in 1933, The Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.*

# Better and Better Off

**by Peter Maurin (1877-1949)**

The world would be better off,
if people tried to become better.
And people would become better
if they stopped trying to be better off.

For when everybody tries
to become better off,
nobody is better off.
But when everybody tries
to become better,
everybody is better off.

Everybody would be rich
if nobody tried to be richer.
And nobody would be poor
if everybody tried to be the poorest.

And everybody would be
what he ought to be
if everybody tried to be
what he wants the other fellow to be. Ω

# What Saint Francis Desired

**by Peter Maurin**

According to Johannes Jorgensen,
a Danish convert, living in Assisi:
Saint Francis desired
that men should give up
superfluous possessions.

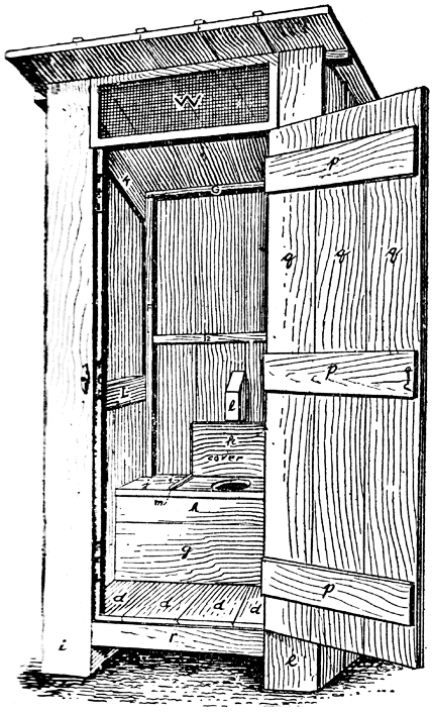
Saint Francis desired
that men should work with their hands.
Saint Francis desired
that men should offer their services
as a gift.
Saint Francis desired that men should ask
other people for help
when work failed them.
Saint Francis desired
that men should live as free as birds.
Saint Francis desired
that men should go through life
giving thanks to God for His gifts. Ω

# Urine Trouble? You're in Luck

**by Stephen Weller**

*Editor's Note: The author recent visited the Anathoth Catholic Worker farm in Luck, Wisconsin. His essay pays tribute to the co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, Peter Maurin's style.*

You're in trouble,
if there's urine trouble.
Get a urine-diverting composting toilet,
and let it overflow,
and you have urine trouble.
But if you waste all that
nitrogen, potassium, and phosphate
in urine,
by flushing the toilet,
then you're in trouble.



Just ask Mike Miles.
He fertilizes his garden with diluted urine
and kills his weeds with condensed urine.
He says,
if everybody knew how to use their urine,
there'd be a lot less trouble:
with sewage,
with nitrogen deficiency in plants,
with crude chemicals, herbicides,
fertilizers,
and the rude companies that make them,
destroying the health of rude nature.
He says there'd be a lot less trouble,
if we solved problems simply,
attacking causes of trouble,
with natural resources
from the context you're in,
like urine.

Visit Anathoth Community Farm.
And you'll be in Luck,
Luck, Wisconsin.
And you'll be in luck,
when you meet Barb Kass.
And see peace and joy
in service, craft, and simplicity,
and hospitality done
in the spirit of charity.
Mike and Barb know
things can't be left to luck,
in the near certain future,
when demand outstrips supply.

But if you left for Luck,
you'd find a place to learn:
maximizing renewable supply,
minimizing frivolous demand,
how to turn solar energy into
food, power, and heat.
You'd find a place
that humbly teaches,
without preaching,
that peacemaking is built,
and hospitality thrives,
on a foundation of sustainability,
and self-sufficiency;
on a Farm.

But you're outta luck,
if you get lucky enough to
put off that filthy rotten system,
that puts food on the table.
And you're in luck,
if you can feed the unlucky.
If you are able
to put food on the table,
to feed yourself and others:
Here, freedom is won from necessity.
And the common good can be pursued
in earnest, without worry
of jeopardizing the common food.

So get to Luck, and find yourself
like I did, in luck, at Anathoth Farm. Ω

# Solitary

**(Continued from Page 1)**

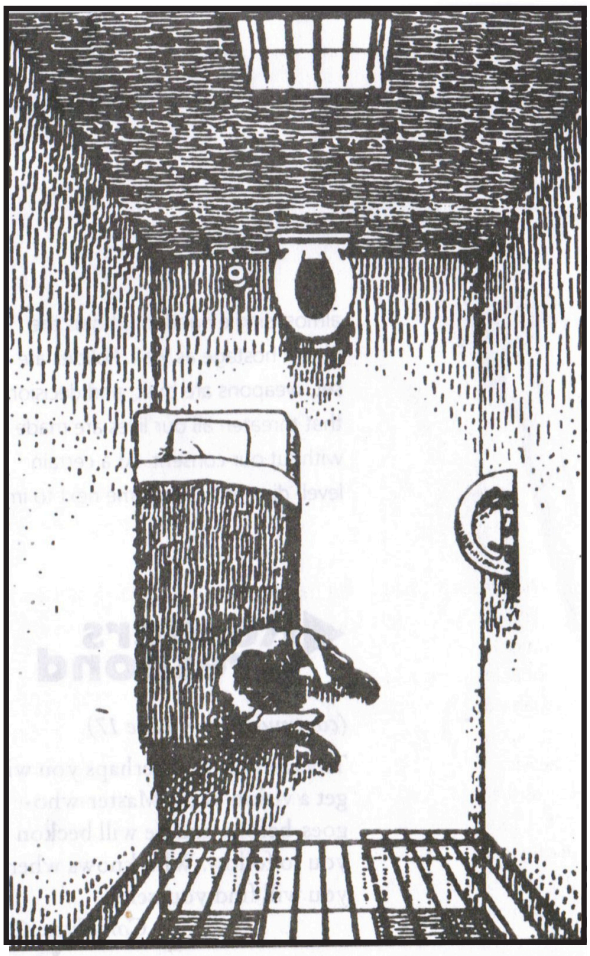
One woman, who was eating meals with us, had just been abruptly taken off anti-anxiety medication. She was understandably having a hard time. A "counselor" came over during lunch and was excoriating us for keeping items on the shelf and desk in our cells. Our friend quietly walked up to the "counselor" and is reported to have said, "Why don't you let the women eat in peace?" She is now in orange, in solitary.

According to Bill Quigley, One of our lawyers at the Disarm Now Plowshares trial, and the legal director for the Center for Constitutional Rights, medical testimony presented in the case of Syed Fahad Hashmi in New York "concluded that after 60 days in solitary, people's mental state begins to break down. That a person will start to experience panic, anxiety, confusion, headaches, heart palpitations, sleep problems, withdrawal, anger, depression, despair, and oversensitivity. Over time this can lead to severe psychiatric trauma and harms like psychosis, distortion of reality, hallucinations, mass anxiety, and acute confusion. Essentially, the mind disintegrates" (*Huffington Post,* April 2010).

Of course, the solitary cells holding women at SeaTac are a small part of the entire solitary population. According to journalist and physician Atul Gawande, the US now has 25,000 prisoners in supermax prisons, and an additional 50-80 thousand in restrictive segregation units (*The New Yorker,* 3/30/09). Although the argument for solitary confinement is that it prevents violence and rule breaking, studies have shown that there is no correlation between its use and a decrease in prison violence. In June 2006, the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons released a study calling for an end to long-term isolation of prisoners. The report concluded that "after 10 days, no benefits of solitary confinement were found, and the harms were clear."

Sister Anne was released from SeaTac after serving her sentence. I am now at the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Dublin, California. Yesterday, I saw a group of people on a tour of the prison. I was on the recreation field, walking the track. I tried to see the facility through their eyes. Women walking, running, talking, laughing, all dressed in khaki, no one rowdy, no one crying. They saw well-cared-for buildings, floors clean and waxed, no garbage or litter, sort of looks like a clean college campus.

But there is a lot that they don't see. They don't see the pain of toothaches. They don't see the pain of mothers who can't raise their children, or the pain of the children who want their moms. They don't see the pain that comes when a close friend or relative dies and you can't celebrate their life or mourn with family. They don't see the pain of women who grew up in the US and face deportation to a country in which they have never lived. They don't see the day-to-day humiliations dealt out by some of the guards. They don't hear the stories of an unjust legal system that grinds up so many women and spits them out into FCI Dublin.



*Equal Justice*

I wanted to walk up and speak to these visitors, but I was not ready to be rebuffed, yelled at, or to see fear in their eyes if I come near them.

At FCI Dublin, walking on the track on the recreation field, I pass the building holding the women in solitary. Here, the windows have a metal shield around them, so we have no contact with the women. Is this acceptable punishment in the United States? Does it serve any purpose? Are there better solutions?

Talking to some of the women at SeaTac, I heard that they thought short times (3-10 days) in the SHU gave them time to refocus, to think, to re-evaluate what they were doing. My own experiences in isolation, first for 3 days and later for 30, were the beginning of a spiritual quest that I've been on for many years now.

I saw that many of the guards made a point of talking through the doors to the women in the SHU, using their unique humor, being human, showing compassion. And I was thankful for that! But what about the structure that puts women in solitary confinement? Our willingness to allow this sort of punishment lets us imagine that it's okay to hold prisoners and torture them at Bagram or Guantánamo.

Jesus said, "**Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me**" Matt. 25:40). Is that not the measure of our humanity? Is any other human being less than us? How is it possible that the US has 5 % of the world's population and 25% of the world's prisoners?

Does our disregard for the humanity of our brothers and sisters held in solitary make it easier to imagine killing millions in nuclear war? Are not the warehoused, thrown-away people in prison symptoms of devalued life, symptoms of the kind of thinking that allows us to invade other countries and spend trillions of dollars on nuclear weapons and consider their use? Ω

# Holiness

**by Donald Spoto**

Holiness is, at its deepest level, a condition of spiritual integrity that always upsets public presumptions and counters the selfishness and madness of power that strangle so much peace in the world. Faith certainly professes that God continues to disclose Himself in all the intricate beauty of the world and its ongoing evolution, but perhaps God reveals Himself most of all in the sudden and unexpected radiance of extraordinary human goodness that we call sanctity.

Holiness does not, we should stress, necessarily depend on fidelity to an institution, or an allegiance to a particular juridical tradition. The true mark of holiness is the character of a life that gives to others, that extends beyond the narrow frontiers of itself, its own comfort and concerns—a life that furthers the humanizing process. Whether one uses the specific vocabulary of religion or not, this is the core: living close to God—a habit of being that (at least according to the great Hebrew prophets of old and the insistent message of Jesus of Nazareth) is seen concretely in loving service, a hunger for peace and justice, and an active longing for concord among nations, groups, and individuals.

The Hebrew prophets provided fair signs of holiness: "**Cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.... Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God**." Jesus summed it up as love of God, made evident in love of neighbor—and the habit of forgiveness as the required standard of our love of God and of God's embrace of us. By forgiveness we do not mean that something wicked is to be forgotten, much less that it is not so wicked after all; forgiveness means the refusal to seek vengeance, to wish or to wreak pain, suffering, or death on the offending enemy. Godliness, in other words, is about peace in all its ramifications. Ω

*Editor's Note: Excerpted from* ***The Reluctant Saint: The Life of Saint Francis of Assisi,*** by Donald Spoto, 2002.

# What's Wrong with the Economy

**by Eugene Burkart**

Something is wrong with the economy, something graver than the loss of jobs, something more ominous than the near collapse in 2008. What's wrong with the economy can be illustrated by a comparison of two markets: the financial market of Wall Street and the farmers' market of Waltham [Massachusetts].

Wall Street consists of a cluster of glass and steel towers in Manhattan where people work in climate-controlled offices far removed from the ground. Most sit in front of computers manipulating figures on a screen. Their work causes vast amounts of money to circulate throughout the world. For all its complexity and sophistication, the work is basically very simple. It's a form of speculation—gambling, really. One spends money today hoping to get more tomorrow.

The farmers' market is located in the parking lot at the corner of Moody Street and Main Street. On Saturdays from June to October vendors set up tents and display the goods which they have grown, raised, or made: fresh fruits and vegetables, flowers, organic meats, cheese, eggs, bread, honey, soap, artwork, and handicrafts. Money is spent at this market in order to take home something good to eat or enjoyable to use.

Two markets: One is run by giant corporations operating on a global scale, the other by small family businesses that are locally rooted. While both are called markets, they have little in common. They are governed by very different rules.

What drives the corporations on Wall Street, as well as the other transnational corporations of the global economy, is one thing and one thing only—profits.

The nature of their markets requires that all other considerations be swept away.Employees are expendable no matter how many years of devoted service. Customers are an anonymous mass to be manipulated by clever advertising. Products are whatever sells regardless of whether they are useful or necessary. Land, water, and air are mere resources to be exploited in the production process. Even patriotism counts for little—for plant closings at home and tax havens abroad are business as usual.

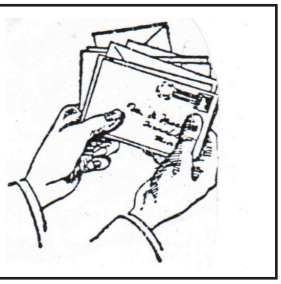
Furthermore, because of their enormous size, these corporations are "too big to fail." If they are in trouble, the government must bail them out, or run the risk of total economic breakdown.

Markets are human constructs. When they are of a proper scale and proportion, markets serve society. When they become too big and powerful, however, a transformation occurs: society itself becomes subordinate and subservient to markets. What's wrong with our economy is that for some time now corporate markets have dominated and ruled our economic, social, and political lives. But it doesn't have to be this way. There are many other possibilities. Just go down to the Waltham Farmers' Market and let your imagination go to work. Ω

YouthGROW Farms
Granbianic Farm, 24 Granby Rd.
Oreanic Farm, 63 Oread St.
The Youth Growing and Raising Organics in Worcester project
uses sustainable growing methods to offer
fresh local produce to our community from our community
Worcester youth
ms in the city

*Editor's Note: Worcester has several fine farmers' markets. The Regional Environmental Council sponsors one on Saturdays, in the parking lot of the Main Street YMCA, 10 AM - 2 PM. It features local produce (some grown by teenagers in the YouthGrow urban garden), crafts, prepared food, and music.*

# Letters



Dear Scott and Claire,
Thanks for your most recent newsletter. I was fascinated but sad to read about the jubilation at Holy Cross when the news of Osama bin Laden's death was announced. I could understand the jubilation because the students are young and they reflect the culture. But what gave me great hope was the five brave students who stood up in opposition. I imagine Christ would have joined the five and been ridiculed along with them.

What was much sadder and more terrifying is Mairead McGuire's letter to President Obama. I agree with McGuire that after 9/11 we are becoming a lawless nation. Thank goodness for her letter, thank goodness for your work. That's what will make the difference.

**Jay O'Callahan**
**Marshfield, Massachusetts**

Dear Claire and Scott,
Once again I am blown away by your newsletter. I found the Aug./Sept. copy excellent from beginning to end. Thank you once again for not only treating timely issues, but also for writing about Michael Webster and including his picture of a sailboat, and about your "most important friend," Robert [Douglas], Claire.

Mairead's letter to Obama is so powerful, but then so is the "Mason Street Musings." I have a dream lately. It is that Obama will soon, in an address to the nation, say to the country, "I have to step down. I can no longer live this lie."...

**Cathy Breen**
**Maryhouse Catholic Worker**
**New York City**

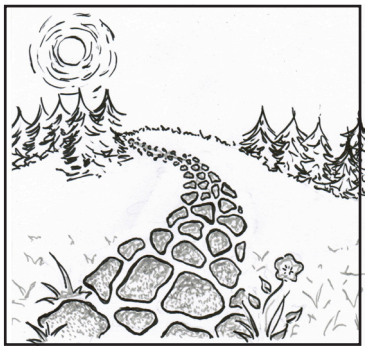
Dear Claire and Scott,
Thank you for giving voice to what I felt after the news of Osama bin Laden's assassination. It saddened me to think about the way these people were executed.

I've been reading Eric Greitan's book, **The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, the Making of a Navy Seal.** It's the story of a young man who spent time with Mother Teresa, caring for the dying in the streets of Calcutta and went on to train to become a Navy SEAL, (a warrior). A paradox indeed....

**Sandra McSweeney**
**Mendon, Massachusetts**

Dear Claire,
I am so sorry about the suffering and death of your friend Robert Talib Douglas. If we all were not known by our worst mistake, people would have created a warmer memorial service for him.

Your Aug./Sept. newsletter was rich in art and articles. Because you welcome poetry, I enclose one of my poems. It was written on seeing a photo of a stone path, from cottage to beach, made by my friend's daughter. Lake Michigan had receded, and stones were necessary for guests to find their way to the water! If you care to use it, Grace might like to make a drawing of it.



*Grace Duffy*

## Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the path of love
Put down one stone at a time
To mark the way to God.

**Judith Williams**
**Waukesha catholic Worker**
**Waukesha, Wisconsin**

Dear Scott,
...It was truly sad for me to read about Robert's death. He suffered for too many years. I appreciate Claire's insight on how strong (inner-strength) he was to endure the decades without giving up the fight. It made me think about my own struggles, how petty they are compared with his.... I believe, too, that it takes unusual people to see the "innate goodness" in others as the majority focus on the negative; also on how his faith and love enriched Claire's life. I pray Robert is in a better place now.

"A Lawless Nation," by Patrick O'Neill, was interesting. It was truly a shock to me to hear on NPR that SEAL Team Six had killed Osama bin Laden and had already buried him at sea. The arrogance of our government seems extreme to me. All the drone attacks which continue show me total disregard for others and a dangerous mindlessness. I would say it's in the same vein as the article, "Deals with the Devil."

Scott, in "The Cross and the Sword" you frighteningly show me how large and pervasive the collective war mentality is out there. It's a cultural strait-jacket. It really takes a person seeking the Truth to break free of social acceptance, to grow, to expand the "richness of comprehension."

**F. Scott Perkins**
**Indian Town, Florida**

Dear Claire and Scott,
Thank you for a wonderful issue that tells the truth about our constant wars and about the environment.

My wish-list is for the Church to take a good look at much of the Old Testament, or at least address the issues that stories like Exodus, Noah's Flood, and Jericho raise for some of us pacifists. I, at least, get no answers from my pastor. Really, how could an all-merciful God drown Egyptians wholesale? How could He drown the whole earth and its people as in Noah?

Surely with current paleogeological information we can legitimately see stories like Exodus and Noah as simply recounting natural phenomena in a religious context. How can we teach and read the story of Jericho, which approves the Israelites' slaughter of every man, woman, and child in the city when we realize it justifies killing?

I ended my letter to my pastor—unanswered, as such letters almost always are—that I'm trying to avoid being like a long-ago Hindu student who quit my medieval lit. class. She had thought she understood Christianity, but gave up when we studied the Crusades. The Middle East, with our help, continues as a constant warzone. Could parts of the Old Testament be justifying the Palestinian genocide?

And of course with clerical silence, there's no point in protesting all the blacktopped (much worse for global warming than light-color paving) parking around

our church, in a suburban location that needs to be as green as possible. How easily we could have some church vans, enabling non-driving seniors to participate in evening events as well as helping people get acquainted before and after Sunday liturgy.

Finally, speaking of color, a returning missionary referred to our suburban area as "an all-white ghetto" and the most casual glance at a high school event, township council, or, of course, the church confirms his observation. While we get informed over the Changes in the Missal, all these problems continue unaddressed by a source that should give us some hope.

It's good to have Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker whose garden, outreach, and openness make my donations well-spent.

**Joan Huber Berardinelli, Ph.D.**
**Allison Park, Pennsylvania**

*Editor's Note: Each December, the Schaeffer-Duffy family re-constructs Ade Bethune's Advent wheel with 25 circles for each day, up til and including Christmas ,and four squares for each Sunday. These circles and squares depict readings from the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament. Every year, the children argue with Scott that a number of readings are indefensibly violent, most notably one wherein the prophetess Judith seduces Holofernes and then cuts off his head. Just as predictably, each year, Scott argues that the Hebrew Scriptures begin with perfect nonviolence in the Garden of Eden and journey back toward it in the prophets Isaiah and Hosea, but that, even in the conquest texts, a theme of the powerless defeating the powerful is maintained. One can read David and Goliath, Judith and Holofernes, Moses and Pharaoh... as rebuffs of military might and testimonies to God's miraculous power.*

*Nonetheless, too many Christians and Jews have used biblical readings to justify horrible acts of conquest and violence. The same kind of fundamentalist interpretations have led some Muslims away from the essential Islamic tenet that God is merciful. It is our belief that, understood in context and as a whole, the Bible is a very human as well as divine guide from sin to holiness.*

*The Peaceable Kingdom by Fritz Eichenberg*

# Catholic Worker Calendar

**October 1— Building a Nonviolent World:** Please join the Agape community for its annual Francis Day celebration featuring speakers, music, and art. 10 A.M.-4 P.M., Hardwick, MA. For more information: peace@agapecommunity.org.

**October 3, 17 & November 7—Mass:** Please join us in prayer and song. 7:30 P.M., 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

**October 7 & November 4—Consistent Life Vigil:** Please join our monthly vigil against war and abortion. Noon - 1 P.M., Military Recruiting Station, 255 Park Avenue, and Planned Parenthood, 470 Pleasant Street, Worcester.

**October 19— Travels in India:** Please join Claire and Aiden as they share pictures and stories from their August trip to northern India. 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

**October 20 & November 17—Ta'anit Tzedek: Jewish Fast for Gaza Prayer Vigil:** Please join us in a Jewish prayer and fast for an end to the Israeli siege on Gaza. Noon-1 P.M. In front of Clark University on Main Street, Worcester.

For more information, call: 508 753-3588 or email theresecw2@gmail.com

# Mason Street Musings

**The Reluctant Saint, The Life of Francis of Assisi,** by Donald Spoto, is the first biography of our patron that I've read in 25 years. As a former Capuchin-Franciscan friar, I had read everything Francis wrote and all the major biographies. About 15 years ago, I picked up a biography by a Franciscan theologian of liberation, but found it contrived and lacking in inspiration, so I set it aside unfinished. Spoto's book is different. From beginning to end, I was captivated by its beauty, historical background, scholarship, and insight. Without dipping into the sentimental and frankly non historical fables that are popular about Francis, Spoto manages to convey a devotion to Christ that is both fresh and moving. I found myself jotting down passages and reading many aloud to Claire (whose patron saint, Clare of Assisi, is also brought alive by Spoto).

Francis, like Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, didn't set out to found a religious order. He told his brothers in 1219, "God has called me by the way of simplicity and humility. Therefore, I do not want you to mention to me any Rule—whether of Saint Augustine, or of Saint Bernard, or of Saint Benedict— or any other form of life except the one the Lord in His mercy has shown to me. The Lord told me what He wanted: He wanted me to be a new kind of fool in this world." Francis tried to take Jesus at His word in the matters of peace, service of the most despised, and dependence on God for every need. That Francis managed to do so without giving in to self-righteousness, masochism, or gloominess, appealed not only to many Christians, but also to the Muslim sultan, Malek-el-Kamil. While Francis didn't convert the Muslim leader, he earned his respect, admiration, and protection. During a time of religious intolerance, Francis was impressed by the Muslim devotion to prayer and their universal greeting "Salaam," which inspired his own salutation, "Peace and Goodness."

*Dan Mauk*

Like all biographers of the little poor man from Assisi, Spoto includes Francis' disappointment with the institutional direction of his community. Little could he have imagined how often the Franciscan order would split in attempts to recapture his charism.

This October, in Las Vegas of all places, Catholic Workers will come together for a national gathering. Like the one we were blessed to host in 2008, this gathering will feature talks, meals, prayer, celebration, and a protest against war. Similar to Francis' early collection of followers, Catholic Workers make up a lay movement without a constitution or hierarchy. The continuation of our movement, with something approaching the vision and integrity of our founders, is entirely dependent on the Holy Spirit moving individuals to see Christ in the poor, to love the enemy, and to have faith that God will give us the means to carry on this work. Like Francis, a Catholic Worker is a new kind of fool.

Since I am now coaching my son Aiden's cross country team, I will not be going to Las Vegas, but Claire will. How we will pay for her travel, like all practical matters hereabouts, is unclear. It is clear that she will bring back the enthusiasm of the many communities which will attend. The established houses have wisdom born of experience, but the new houses have faith in innovation. Both are manna in the Nevada desert.

The summer passes into fall with its particular joys and challenges. Our bills are rising, but we will not despair. You, as emmissaries of the good God, take care to see we never want for the tools of our ministry. God bless you all! Ω

**Scott**

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